

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-21 and 23-44 are presented for consideration, with Claims 1, 21 and 41 being independent.

Independent Claims 1, 21 and 41 have been amended to further distinguish Applicants' invention from the cited art. In addition, editorial changes have been made to selected claims.

Claims 1, 3-5, , 8-13, 16, 21, 23-25, 28-33, 36 and 41-44 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig '294. Claims 6, 7, 18-20, 26, 27 and 38-40 are rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig in view of Brunson '823. Finally, Claims 14, 15, 17, 34, 35 and 37 are rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig and further in view of Palmer '683. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 of Applicants' invention relates to a distributed group system for displaying information about what a user is doing on a screen of each terminal device with text data. The system comprises a server device connected to a plurality of terminal devices via a communication channel, and having receiving means for repeatedly receiving a picked-up image and text data about what a user is doing from each of the terminal devices, and first transmitting means for repeatedly transmitting the picked-up image and the text data to each of the terminal devices. In addition, each of the terminal devices includes image input means for inputting a picked-up image from a camera, status input means for inputting text data at its own terminal device, with the text data including information about what a user is doing, and second transmitting means for repeatedly transmitting an image picked-up at its own terminal device and

text data input by the status input means to the server device in response to a user's input operation. Each terminal also includes receiving means for repeatedly receiving the picked-up image and the text data of each terminal device from the server device, and display means for displaying a virtual office where a group of a user's virtual single rooms are displayed, wherein each user's virtual single room has the received picked-up image which is transmitted repeatedly and the text data about what a user is doing.

Claims 21 and 41 relate to a method of managing a distributed group system and a terminal device, respectively, and have been amended along the same lines as Claim 1. These claims, therefore, display a virtual office area where a group of a user's virtual single rooms are displayed, with each user's virtual single room having received picked-up image data which is transmitted repeatedly and text data about what a user is doing.

By displaying in a virtual office area image data and text data about what a user is doing, an efficient and high performance distributed group system and terminal device can be provided.

The primary citation to Ludwig relates to a multimedia collaboration system capable of displaying an information aggregate of another user's workstation. A computer based system uses geographically dispersed multimedia LANs that are connected by a WAN. As understood, Ludwig uses a collaboration initiator to indicate members registered in an organization, and session participants are selected from a graphical Rolodex. New participants can be invited by clicking an ADD button.

In contrast to Applicants' claimed invention, however, Ludwig is not understood to teach or suggest, among other features, the capability of displaying a virtual office area where a group of a user's virtual single rooms are displayed, with each user's virtual single room having a received picked-up image and text data about what a user is doing. Although Ludwig is capable of transmitting images between terminal devices and sharing a graphical image (see, for example, Figure 2A or Figure 37), Ludwig is not read to teach or suggest providing a telephone conference system wherein text data about what a user is doing is displayed. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103 in view of Ludwig is respectfully requested.

The secondary citations to Brunson and Palmer fail to compensate for the deficiencies in Ludwig. The patent to Brunson relates to a video messaging system, and is relied upon for a teaching of a universal mailbox to store messages. In Palmer, a video teleconferencing method and apparatus is provided, and this patent is relied upon for its teaching of a frame rate control.

Therefore, without conceding the propriety of modifying Ludwig in view of either Brunson or Palmer, it is submitted that such combinations still fail to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of Claims 6, 7, 14, 15, 17-20, 26, 27, 34, 35 and 37-40 are respectfully requested.

Accordingly, it is submitted that Applicants' invention as set forth in independent Claims 1, 21 and 41 is patentable over the cited art. In addition, dependent Claims

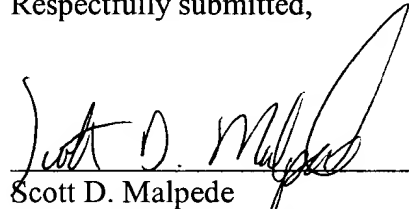
3-20 and 23-43 set forth additional features of Applicants' invention. Independent consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Applicants are submitting concurrently herewith a Request for Interview in which a personal interview is requested in order to expedite allowance of this case.

Due consideration and prompt passage to issue are respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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